

II. TA job description

1. Job description

TAs' job is to provide "educational assistance in laboratory work, practices, seminars, or lectures" for undergraduate students, students in a master's course (or the first half of a doctoral course), etc. Therefore, their primary duties are to offer interactive classes that place importance on interaction between faculty members and students and to improve the quality of education through active learning and other methods. Such tasks as confirming student attendance and handing out printouts are secondary duties for TAs.

Even though TAs' job is to provide "educational assistance," they actual engage in a wide range of duties. For example, TAs provide instruction assistance in laboratory work, practices, and discussions, manage student attendance, assist in preparation of course materials (including making photocopies), operate or prepare educational devices, assist in collecting, reviewing, and scoring papers and other course requirements, assist in supervising or scoring exams, and respond to questions from students. However, TAs are not required to perform all of these duties, and which duties are performed by TAs depends on course types (lecture, seminar, laboratory, practice), student classifications (undergraduate first-year or sophomore, undergraduate junior or senior, graduate student), the number of students, and teaching styles of faculty members. In addition, some duties can be performed only by those who have passed screening for TA experience, etc., and obtained Teaching Fellow (TF) status.

For details of duties of TAs and TFs, see Table A.

[Table A]

TA classification and main educational assistance duties that can be performed by TAs

Job description		TA classification	Teaching Assistant (TA)	Teaching Fellow (TF)
Duties related to planning and design of classes	Assisting in preparation of class goals and contents (syllabi)		—	○
	Assisting in preparation of contents, objectives, and assignments for each class session		—	○
	Assisting in preparation of course materials		—	○
	Assisting in preparation of exam questions and assignments		—	○
	Assisting in preparation of grading standards and methods		—	○
Duties related to provision of classes	Delivering lectures, etc. (as an assistant, with the faculty member present)*		—	○
	Assisting in preparation of contents of course materials, references, etc.		○	○
	Printing out and handing out course materials, references, etc.		○	○
	Confirming student attendance (circulating and collecting the attendance roster, etc.)		○	○
	Preparing educational devices, equipment, etc.		○	○
	Preparing laboratory devices, equipment, etc.		○	○
	Explaining course outlines and holding orientation		○	○
	Providing instruction and advice relating to lectures and seminars		○	○
	Providing instruction, assistance, and advice relating to practices and practicals		○	○
	Assisting in discussions		○	○
	Providing instruction and advice in laboratory work		○	○
	Responding to questions from students		○	○
	Operating educational devices		○	○
	Operating laboratory devices		○	○
	Summarizing class work and providing feedback		○	○
	Collecting and sorting out assignments, etc.		○	○
	Putting away educational devices, equipment, etc., and cleaning up the classroom		○	○
	Putting away laboratory devices, equipment, etc., and cleaning up the laboratory		○	○
Duties related to scoring and grading	Assisting in exam supervision (distributing and collecting exam papers and walking around a classroom)		○	○
	Sorting out term-end exams and assignments and answer sheets		○	○
	Assisting in scoring of exams and papers (checking contents)		○	○
	Providing instruction assistance relating to graduation theses (master's theses) and graduation research work		○	○
Other duties related to operation of classes	Assisting in provision of classes during office hours		○	○
	Uploading e-learning contents, such as manaba		○	○
	Assisting in operation of e-learning contents, such as manaba (engaging in duties related to e-learning contents, such as assisting in scoring and entering comments)		○	○
	Transcribing contents		○	○
	Providing instruction assistance in off-campus research activities		○	○
	Taking measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases (under the supervision of the faculty member)		○	○

○: Duties that can be performed by TAs in each classification

*: TFs are allowed to take charge of some classes in an undergraduate course, on the basis of the instruction plans of the faculty member in charge of the course, if doing so is expected to produce sufficient educational effects. The organization in charge of selecting TFs sets standards and conditions under which TFs are allowed to take charge of some classes on an as-needed basis.

2. General matters

1) Confirming the roles of TAs in each class session

TAs' roles differ greatly from class to class. To ensure that classes are provided through cooperation between you and the faculty member in charge of the course, discuss sufficiently with the faculty member about your roles for each class session and the details of your duties before the start of the course by referring to the syllabus, etc. You should also confirm what materials should be prepared, how to respond to tardiness or absence, etc. In addition, if there are multiple TAs for a class, it is necessary to confirm the segregation of duties among them.

2) Operating educational devices

If a projector and other devices are used in classes, you need to know fully how to operate them. Take a dry run in advance (several days before the first day of the course), and make sure to confirm the conditions of each classroom, such as where power sources are located, how to operate the lights, projector, screen, DVD player, volume controller, etc., how these devices are installed, and how the screen can be viewed. You can borrow remote controls of devices, keys to equipment boxes, microphones, extension cords, laser pointers, etc., at the Academic Service Office that manages classrooms.

3) Printing out course materials and references

When making photocopies of course materials and references, ensure that they are easy to read for students, and the correct number of copies are made. In addition, when making copies of published materials, ensure that sources are cited. Making photocopies takes time, and involves mistakes. The number of available copying machines is also limited, so allow enough time when making photocopies.

4) Calling the roll and checking attendance

There are various ways to manage student attendance, including circulating and collecting attendance rosters or comment sheets. Discuss with the faculty member and confirm how to manage student attendance, taking into account the type of the course, the number of students, and other factors. In addition to using attendance rosters or comment sheets, in small classes, you can check attendance without calling the roll if you memorize students' names and faces. In online or large classes, you can use manaba.

5) Responding to questions, etc., from students

Confirm how much TAs should be involved in responding to questions and opinions from students. If issues that cannot be responded to by TAs, such as requests for trouble-related consultations, grade objections, and dishonest acts, arise, the faculty member will immediately respond to them.

3. Matters specific to each type of duty

1) Providing instruction in discussions

Class discussion is an effective learning method, which helps students master how to form their views on each theme. TAs are expected to be properly involved in discussions as assistants. To ensure smooth discussions, discuss sufficiently with the faculty member in charge of the course and confirm how you should be involved. To take some detailed examples, TAs should (1) instruct (or encourage) silent students to participate in discussions; (2) present questions or opinions that help activate discussions as necessary; (3) make adjustments in case discussions wander too far away from the discussion objective or theme; (4) ensure that all participants have the opportunity to comment; and (5) notify participants of the remaining time as necessary. Students wonder whether it is safe to express their opinions freely, and they fear that if they say something wrong, they will be sneered at. Keeping these worries of students in mind, try not to respond negatively to students' opinions.

2) Assisting in scoring of papers

Faculty members in charge of courses have full responsibility for managing papers, etc., and determining final scores; however, TAs can engage in assisting in scoring of papers under the guidance and supervision of faculty members. When assisting in scoring of papers, you need to discuss with the faculty member in advance and confirm the standards and criteria of scoring. Furthermore, if there are multiple TAs for the same course, they can, for example, score the same paper to prevent scoring bias.

The time spent to assist in scoring of papers is included in your working hours. Set the dates of scoring of papers in advance and have the faculty member submit the work schedule to the office in charge.

3) Assisting in laboratory work

In assisting in laboratory work, TAs are expected to prepare laboratory instruments, reagents, etc., provide explanations to students, assist in performing laboratory tasks, and clean up the laboratory, among other duties. Discuss with the faculty member about the details of laboratory work and your roles, and if necessary, assist in preparation work. If you are to provide instruction assistance in laboratory work, make sufficient preparations for it, including practicing responses to anticipated questions, while considering whether you understand detailed laboratory procedures and what explanations are easy to understand for students. It is important to discuss with the faculty member to clarify any uncertainties or doubts. The time spent to prepare for laboratory work is included in your working hours. Just like assisting in scoring of papers, include the time spent to prepare for laboratory work in the attendance book.

In laboratory work, ensure that safety is always the top priority. Foreseeing possible scenarios of accidents, consult with the faculty member and determine what precautions should be given to students and how to respond to accidents if, by chance, they occur. To be able to quickly respond to accidents, familiarize yourself fully with the ways of dealing with accidents; for example, you should be familiar with how to use emergency shower and eye wash stations and where fire extinguishers and first-aid kits are located. Information on safety management relating to laboratory work, etc., is provided on the website of the Office of Occupational Health and Safety Management (<http://anzenkanri.tsukuba.ac.jp/>), which can be accessed on campus. Confirm the information on the website as

necessary.

4) Assisting in large lecture classes

In large classes of more than 150 students, TAs are likely to engage frequently in assistance work for faculty members, including confirming and managing student attendance, handing out materials and assignments, collecting assignments, papers, etc., and preparing, operating, and putting away educational devices.

However, even in large lecture classes, it is possible to create an environment where students can learn interactively, instead of receiving knowledge one-way from faculty members, by, for example, introducing small-group discussions and using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In such cases, TAs are expected to play roles more than just assistance.

5) Assisting in exam supervision

TAs can assist in exam supervision under the instruction of faculty members in charge of courses. Discuss with the faculty member and confirm your roles, etc., in advance. If dishonest acts, etc., are identified during exams, the faculty member will take full responsibility and respond to them.

6) Assisting in preparation of syllabi

TFs can assist in preparation of syllabi. Assist the faculty member in preparation of syllabi by adopting students' points of view on what should be learned through classes, how, etc.

University of Tsukuba has established the University of Tsukuba: Guidelines for Creating a Syllabus (<http://www.tsukuba.ac.jp/education/syllabus-guide.html>). The guidelines stipulate what should be included in syllabi prepared by faculty members in charge of courses and how, and also include matters related to TAs' assistance in classes, including class goals and plans; therefore, refer to them as necessary.

7) ICT tools

You can use ICT tools to promote active learning. Here is a brief explanation of the University of Tsukuba's learning management system (manaba).

In manaba, an e-learning system, there is a website for each course, and it has functions such as posting course materials and relevant videos, organizing and collecting assignments or quizzes, offering bulletin boards where students can discuss and ask questions about classes, and sending notices and communications; students can, at any time, prepare for classes and review after class. The user manual for manaba is available on the University of Tsukuba's website (<http://www.ecloud.tsukuba.ac.jp/manaba>).

<p>[Contact information for inquiries about manaba] LMS Support Desk, Office of Educational Cloud Phone: 029-853-6892 Email: support-manaba@ecloud.tsukuba.ac.jp</p>

8) Providing online classes

After the spread of COVID-19 in 2020, the university has come up with various creative online classes.

The university will offer classes suitable for online instruction, classes that use the advantages of both online and face-to-face instruction, etc., on the basis of the experiences and achievements that the university has accumulated; so discuss in advance with the faculty member about how to provide these classes.

In providing online classes, read carefully the “Portal to assistance for faculty members offering online classes” and “Online class guidance” sections of the Academic Computing and Communications Center’s website (<https://www.cc.tsukuba.ac.jp/wp/>) and make necessary preparations for providing such classes.

Some new students and others are expected to be still unready to take online classes in April; therefore, discuss with the faculty member also about how to deal with such students.

9) Taking measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, etc.

When providing face-to-face classes in these times of the coronavirus pandemic, it is necessary to take measures to prevent the spread of diseases.

As for the university’s infection prevention measures for face-to-face classes, the Guidelines for Conducting Face-to-Face Classes Based on the COVID-19 Situation (established in September 2020) provide precautions to follow when offering face-to-face classes. For example, it is necessary to comply with the conditions under which students are allowed to participate in face-to-face classes, make arrangements for students who do not desire to participate in such classes, fill out health observation forms, including existence of cold symptoms, body temperature, and movement history, make sure to take students’ temperature, implement thoroughly infection prevention measures, and limit students with symptoms from entering the university premises. Follow instructions from the faculty member regarding infection prevention measures for yourself and students.

Furthermore, matters directly involving students are thoroughly and widely notified to students and their parents or guardians using the university’s website, student bulletin boards, etc.; so also confirm these matters.

4. Prohibited duties

Under the TA system, students engage in educational assistance work relating to classes under the instruction of faculty members in charge of courses, and the faculty members and the university itself have ultimate responsibility for the courses offered. Consequently, the following duties cannot be performed by TAs:

- 1) Providing classes when the faculty member is absent
- 2) Giving grades
- 3) Scoring exams
- 4) Engaging in duties other than those pertaining to the course that the TA is in charge of

Further details of these four types of duties are as follows:

1) Providing classes when the faculty member is absent

When the faculty member in charge of the course is absent due to an official trip, etc., TAs cannot provide classes, supervise self-study sessions, or engage in other relevant duties on behalf of the faculty member. TAs can assist in

classes under the supervision of the faculty member. In addition, TFs are allowed to take charge of some classes in an undergraduate course, on the basis of the instruction plans of the faculty member in charge of the course, if doing so is expected to produce sufficient educational effects. Even in such cases, however, TFs cannot substitute for the faculty member (offer classes on behalf of the faculty member). The organization in charge of selecting TFs sets standards and conditions under which TFs are allowed to take charge of some classes.

2) Giving grades; and 3) Scoring exams

The faculty member should take responsibility for giving grades to each student; therefore, TAs cannot engage in duties directly related to determining final grades. However, TAs can sort out and verify assignments, quizzes, etc., and assist in scoring of exams and papers, on condition that the faculty member conducts final checks and takes full responsibility. Meanwhile, the time spent to perform these duties is included in the total number of TAs' working hours.

4) Engaging in duties other than those pertaining to the course that the TA is in charge of

TAs cannot engage in duties unrelated to the courses that they are in charge of; for example, they cannot assist the faculty member in research and run errands for the faculty member. Faculty members in charge of courses should make sure not to make TAs perform those duties. If you are asked to perform such duties, consult with the head of the relevant educational organization, your academic supervisor, the Academic Service Office, etc. Meanwhile, the standard number of working hours for TAs is "10 hours a week (40 hours a month), and due consideration is given to ensure that the graduate students do not suffer adverse effects in receiving research guidance, taking classes, etc." (according to the Treatment of Teaching Assistants at the University of Tsukuba, a ruling of the President of the University of Tsukuba dated March 23, 2006).